



Forestry Quail Habitat Recovery Cost-Share Program

Virginia's Quail Recovery Initiative

Forestry Topic 16

www.dof.virginia.gov

June 2014



Photo courtesy of VDGIF

Program Overview

Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) promotes healthy, sustainable forests for Virginians and Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) seeks to manage Virginia's wildlife to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth. VDGIF is partnering with VDOF to advance Virginia's Quail Recovery Initiative by providing funding assistance to forest landowners for a variety of good forestry practices, which will enhance quail habitat.

Bobwhite quail populations have plummeted in recent years due to loss of appropriate habitat like brushy, weedy areas; field and forest edges, and fallow lands. Forestry practices that promote healthy and productive forests can, at the same time, create good habitat for quail and other animals and insects that prefer these sunny and open conditions.

The program is administered by the Virginia Department of Forestry with funding support from Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

Who Qualifies

The program is for private, non-industrial forest landowners within the 15-county area identified in the quail recovery initiative as "target" counties. These counties comprise six Soil and Water Conservation Districts—the Big Walker SWCD (Bland and Wythe); the Chowan Basin SWCD (Greensville,

Southampton and Sussex); the Culpeper SWCD (Culpeper, Greene, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock); the Halifax SWCD (Halifax); the Headwaters SWCD (Augusta), and the Three Rivers SWCD (Essex, King and Queen, and King William).

Qualifying Practices

Cost-share is available for several approved practices, but shall not exceed 150 acres and \$10,000 per fiscal year per landowner (tax identification entity).

Practice #1 – Herbicide Application in Managed Forests

Thinning of forest stands mid-way through their life cycle allows for increased growth and tree health. The additional sunlight initially allows many plants beneficial to wildlife to grow under the pines, but less favorable woody plants will soon dominate the understory. Controlling these woody plants with herbicides opens the forest floor again for grasses and weeds preferred by quail.

Specifications:

- ◆ Forest stands that have been commercially thinned for at least one season
- ◆ Ground or aerial application of a herbicide that targets certain plants and has little effect on beneficial wildlife plants
- ◆ 60% of cost, not to exceed \$50/acre
- ◆ Applicant agrees to maintain practice for five years (pine) or 10 years (hardwood)

Practice #2 – Commercial Thinning in Small Acreage Stands

Thinning promotes healthy forests by giving trees more room to grow and also allows more sunlight on the ground, encouraging the growth of small plants for wildlife food and cover. However, it can be difficult to get loggers to thin small-acreage stands due to the cost of moving equipment to the site.

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Specifications:

- ◆ Stands from 5 acres to 40 acres, depending upon species
- ◆ First commercial thinning, moderate to heavy thinning (per forester recommendations)
- ◆ \$100/acre incentive to landowner
- ◆ Applicant agrees to maintain practice for five years (pine) or 10 years (hardwood)

Practice #3 – Diminished Pine Species Establishment

Shortleaf and longleaf pine produce high-quality lumber and were once common in Virginia, but are now greatly diminished. Due to their growth pattern, young stands stay open longer and are more tolerant to fire, both of which benefit wildlife.



Specifications:

- ◆ Incentive to prepare land and plant shortleaf or longleaf pine
- ◆ Tree spacing no closer than 10-foot by 10-foot spacing (434 trees/acre)

- ◆ 80% of costs, up to maximum of \$200/acre
- ◆ Applicant agrees to maintain practice for 10 years

Practice #4 – Non-Commercial Thinning

Stands that are too thick will shade out beneficial ground plants and have lower potential for timber. Early thinning will improve tree growth, health and development of wildlife-favoring plants.

Specifications:

- ◆ Young, thick forest stands (per forester recommendations)
- ◆ Stand thinned (pine) or crop trees released (hardwood)
- ◆ 80% of costs, up to \$100/acre
- ◆ Applicant agrees to maintain practice for 10 years

Practice #5 – Prescribed Burning in Forest Stands

Fire, under controlled and managed conditions, is a tool that can benefit both forests and wildlife. It can reduce build-ups of hazardous fuels, opens the understory, and encourages new plant growth used by wildlife.

Specifications:

- ◆ Mid-aged or older pine or hardwood stands (per forester recommendations).
- ◆ Conducted safely and according to burning laws
- ◆ 60% of costs, up to \$40/acre
- ◆ Applicant agrees to maintain practice for three years

For More Information

For more information about this program and other VDOF services or programs, please contact your local Virginia Department of Forestry office or visit www.dof.virginia.gov.

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